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**THE INFLUENCE OF CONTRACTION OF TIME AND
DISTANCE ON THE WAY WE CONSIDER PLACES**

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Abstract :

The objective of this paper is to present the implications of the contraction of space and time on individuals' relationships with them.

According to us, the contraction of space results in an excess of space and leads to its temporalization. In a similar manner, the contraction of time results in an excess of time : time which is more and more disorganized. An opposition is thus made between modern, ordered time, and postmodern "*patchwork time*".

This contraction of space and time leads to a rise in anxieties and a certain quest for eternity, itself associated with the renewal of different forms of tribal organization. Facing this twofold movement of contraction, places, for us, represent a place of refuge for individuals. Our proposition is that three different types of places be distinguished according to the level of exposure to real space-time and the role played by the individual's body.

Marketing Professionals are bewildered by consumers of this century's end. They are related to chameleons jumping from one brand-name to the next and putting to the test the robustness of tools which, until now, have succeeded in helping and reassuring the decision-makers. At the same time, the marketing revolution is well underway and some authors even see the emergence of neo-marketing. By emphasizing the relation maintained by individuals with space and time, we may be able to apply our knowledge to new perspectives which appear in marketing today.

Various observations lead us to believe that profound changes have taken place on individuals' perceptions of space and time. Marketing must take this perspective into consideration. By basing ourselves on philosophers' works, we shall demonstrate the feasibility of speaking about the contraction of space and time. We shall see that this phenomenon coincides with an omnipresence of time in society where individuals, confronted with more time, in an ever more disturbing world, find refuge in the world of consumption. This evolution obliges us to rethink the way in which service settings are conceived. We suggest that three types of places be distinguished. This will allow us to demonstrate the role that virtual spaces can play in the conception of service settings.

1. Space and Time today

What is our relationship with space and time today? The question may seem absurd since why should it evolve? Nevertheless, it appears to be primordial. In fact, we believe that it is today undergoing profound changes.

1. 1 Space

A tireless conqueror, man had no respite while trying to measure his power in terms of spatial horizon. Thus, during the Middle Ages, princes tried to advance their frontiers by making war on their neighbors or by encouraging their subjects to venture out in search of unknown lands. Today, victory seems total. Planet Earth almost no longer offers more "*Terra Incognita*". Space, as seen by the individual today, has become unified, globalized space. This

space is imposed on him. In fact, with today's progress in means of transportation and information technologies, this space is increasingly difficult to escape. Mastery of space induces an excess of space and leads to its temporalization.

1. 1. 1. Excess of space

Could we have imagined, only 100 years ago, that it would one day be possible to circumnavigate the world on a supersonic plane in under 33 hours? Increasingly faster, means of transportation put the far reaches of the planet within the reach of all. Space is reduced and no longer represents an obstacle for people. Space is shrunk even more as more *"virtual trips"* are developed over computer networks. In fact, means of moving data has evolved more rapidly than means of transportation. Sounds and images from the entire world cover long distances and cross far off borders to arrive, surging, into individual homes.

For individuals, the consequence of these two revolutions is a change on the spatial scale. Life is no longer measured as remaining on a village level, nor even on that of a particular region, but rather on a world level. Henceforth, whether it be economical, social, political, or technological, whatever happens on the planet is almost nearly seen in real time.

With globalization of spatial references, the individual's points of reference are increasingly blurred as his or her knowledge about a seemingly more and more complex world increases. Individuals facing this contraction of space which rushes the planet into a single point, experience *"space overdose"* and are left with a sense of disorientation. VIRILIO (1996b) writes the comments of an old farmer living in Ile-de-France who was asked to explain his idea of the greatest modern disaster :

"information.[...] You see, he said, for me World War One broke out from one day to the next, we didn't see it coming. The day before general mobilization, all was quiet, no one here really thought about a war and we are only one hundred kilometers from Paris ... Whereas with the radio and now, the television, we always have the impression that we are on the eve of a war or some type of disaster, it is no longer bearable."

Confronted with this mass of information that gains in size, individuals feel increasing difficulties in making sense of it. Moreover, it obliges individuals to react even more quickly since, with networks, this mass of information is accessible to all. Pressure, therefore, builds.

This sense of disorientation is magnified by a growing interpenetration of places and the dematerialization of space. With e-business, work by phone, a private individual's place of residence becomes a branch travel agency, a supermarket or an office. The frontiers between these places become more diffuse escaping each individual. In some ways, it is as if places were disappearing and opening the way to space streams (CASTELLS, 1998).

Becoming less and less well bounded, space no longer provides points of reference as stable as in the past. Various threats for an individual's identity come as a result. As ROCHEFORT (1997) underlines it, we are witnessing the mixing of domestic and professional spheres. Places increasingly serve both domestic and professional purposes. Cars are, in fact, being equipped to act as office annexes and houses are readied to welcome all the necessary material which will allow persons to work out of their homes. It is also likely that the work place will no longer be unique and, depending on the circumstances, work will undoubtedly find its place in other spaces : airports, hotels, train stations, homes, cars, planes, trains...

Generally speaking, the tendency is towards multifunctional places where different groups and different times mingle.

1. 1. 2 Temporalization of Space

The dematerialization of space leads to another phenomenon : the temporalization of space. In fact, the latter has become ephemeral, virtual and vanishes within the rapidity of networks and high speed transportation. An obstacle no more, it almost ceases to exist. Thus the voyager no longer finds interest in the distance travelled, but in his connection time. Man is confronted with a paradoxical situation. While he wanted to assert his power by mastering length and space, he finds himself brought back to time which Lagneau says is the "*sign of his powerlessness*". Conquering space is a revealing example. By escaping the Earth's gravitational attraction in order to look upon her from above, man, at the same time, verifies

the roundness and finiteness. He could feel all-powerfull if it was not for his recognition that the Earth is lost in an ever expanding Universe, the dimensions of which are incomprehensible by human beings. What's more, distances in extraterrestrial space are expressed in terms of light-years as if temporalization of space had occurred. It appears that time would have taken revenge. Man, upon discovering the finiteness of his world, sees his dream of power to be vain, everthing brings him back to time, sign of his powerlessness.

1. 2. Time today

Today's individuals appear to be confronted with more time. In this manner, and like the contraction of space, time too is constrained, opening the individual's temporal horizon and giving way to an excess of time which is more and more disorganized.

1. 2. 1. Excess of time

Two factors contribute to this return of time in man's life. First of all, man invents time by pushing farther away the border of the past and of the future. For centuries, Man made do with only four or five thousand years of existence. Today, his birth is put off to some millions of years ago. In the same way, he estimates the age of the Earth to be 4.5 billion years old and sets that of the Universe at between 7 and 15 billion years old. Man is suddenly faced with a past whose dimensions are extraordinary. Preserving vestiges of the past qualitatively enriches this past. In parallel, the individual can legitimately think that his future equally possesses unimaginable dimensions. Thus for Klein (1995) :

"Certain technological consequences are pushing us towards such distant futures that humanity is surprised on having to imagine them for the first time in its history. Never in the past did humanity have to imagine itself so far in the future."

Another factor contributing to this widening of the temporal horizon is the acceleration of time. For AUGÉ (1992), man has history on his heels. Today, with life expectancy up, four generations now live side by side. At the same time, man finds himself confronted with history, he lives history. Speed is an important element of this phenomenon. Today's individual lives at high speed, like bullet trains and computer networks. Things are

more *"live"* and more urgent (VIRILIO, 1995). Almost nothing lasts and the individual finds himself under constant temporal pressure. His past is more and more closer and his future is arriving more rapidly. He lives a more restrained time as a gigantic landscape presents itself before him, *"a landscape of events"* (VIRILIO, 1996). Everything gets jumbled, causes and effects, effects and causes. Past, present and future are more and more mixed in his daily life. The result is a disorienting excess of time. If, before, the individual could have the illusion that some things were immortal, today, he sees them being born and dying. Their duration becomes tangible, apprehensible by all, almost null. Accompanying this accelerated production of time is a multitude of techniques destined to conserve it. Today their advent is known as the *"all digital"*. Thanks to them, what once seemed irreversible may now be reversible. Man therefore faces what could be called the end of his certainties. This, too, makes its contribution to the disorder of time.

1. 2. 2. The disorder of time

The abundance of time leads to an unstoppable rhythm of past, present and future, to the point of making them disappear. Time goes by quicker and quicker. This time is equally less ordered than before. In the past, for ages, religion rhythmized our days and years according to periods dedicated to religious activities. Later, the day was organized around the tradition of *"work, eat and sleep"*. Today, this organization is taking on new forms. The separation between work time and leisure time are less and less clear. Individual rhythms come about as each person wants to be in command of his or her own time. In France, negotiations on the 35-hour workweek become part of the desynchronization of time for numerous workers because of the annualization of work time. Following the example of places, there is also interpenetration of time which contributes to a certain temporal disorder. While the succession of past, present and future seemed unchangeable the acceleration of time confronts the individual with another form of time whose frontiers are increasingly diffuse. This leads VIRILIO (1995) to complete chronological time (past, present, future) with *"dromological"* (*"dromologique"*) or *"chronoscopical"* (*"chronoscopique"*) time, (underexposed, exposed, overexposed). In this case, the notion of exposition substitutes that of succession. Modernity had left the individual with well-ordered, linear time; postmodernism made him realize that this was an illusion. This *"chronoscopical"* time originated with the speed of light which we

would have reached. It is as if we were witnessing the annihilation of modern time by *"patchwork time"*.

The individual's temporal horizon is thus widened due to continual inventing of time and its acceleration. Moreover, it seems less ordered and less regulated. The individual is therefore forced to project himself even farther in the future while this future continues to arrive more quickly. In the end and in some respects he catches a glimpse of his death each time. As LA BRUYERE put it :

"Death only happens once, but is felt over a lifetime : dreading it is harder than suffering from it."

If the world in which each individual lives seems complex or even chaotic, it is no doubt due to this double excess of time and space both of which originate in the contraction of space and time. It blurs man's points of reference and is accompanied by a rise in anxiety. In fact, this chaotic universe is not a place where he can find coherence and durability. This most likely explains the high demand for meaning that is seen today. Moreover, this excess of space and time contributes to man's feeling his end. Man must think about his future in a spatiotemporal horizon whose dimensions are widening. This offers more and more liberty but also entails the obligation of making choices in an increasingly uncertain world.

2. A anxious society in search of eternity

The excess of space and time as we have noted, is more prosaically accompanied by a general rise in anxiety levels of the entire population. The disorder of places and of time rekindles, according to us, a search for eternity.

2. 1. Rising anxieties and clan rebirth

Individuals' anxieties are being rekindled by the omnipresence of time. This is amplified by the end of meta-stories and that of modernity. With the advent of postmodernism, some authors are witnessing the revival of clans.

2. 1. 1. The end of meta-stories

For LYOTARD (1988), modernity is characterized by meta-stories which are distinguished from myths since their legitimacy is not in an original act, but in the realization of an Idea : that of emancipation. This Idea would like to be universal. Stories concerning modernity deal with peoples' abandoning their own cultural identity for a "*universal civic identity*". Authors see in this century's end, the end of modernity and that of the great stories which governed it. Various signs of modernity being questioned are found in the Idea of progress. Scientific progress is also refuted through collective awareness concerning risks which surround us. No longer does anyone believe in the end of disease. As the population gets older, cancer, which we thought we would be able to beat, gives the impression that the number of its victims is increasing. More so, old diseases like tuberculosis rear their heads anew while new diseases (AIDS, Ebola ...) appear. Medicine, and more generally, science are showing their limits. Social determinism, also, fades more and more. If during the thirty-year boom period after World War II, individuals thought they were going towards less social inequalities, one can see today that this dynamic has broken, or possibility reversed. Henceforth, talk is of the gap between those who have and those who have not. No one can continue to say that he or she is sheltered from exclusion.

The contraction of space and time makes the individual feel his impotence more deeply. The decline of great stories on which modernity found solid ground, increases his fears and, most particularly, those which are linked to his end. He begins doubting his being a bearer of progress. AIDS, Tchernobyl, the Gulf War, ecological risks make him fear for his future. There is no guarantee against the return of barbarity. Anything is possible. Keeping with this idea, POPPER and LORENZ (1995) note :

"The risk exist and in the end, it is most likely, it must be said, life will disappear. It is not a question of certainty. We must all die, and perhaps, life must cease to exist as well."

The individual cannot predict his future. He distances himself from blissful scientism and following what happens in the physical realm, he realizes the absence of certainties. His doubting surprises him and he distances himself from the idea of durability and invincible continuity. He can no longer count on Mother Nature to fix his mistakes. However, each day, human action marks, sometimes forever, the fragile world and thus puts this burden on future generations. As KLEIN (1995) says, man lives today during a :

"...time of never ending possibilities, which is also, by the choices he comes up with and the questions he invents, a time of great confusion."

"Technosciences" have done in the modernist project by preferring the spatiotemporal contraction. The aura of great universal stories have diminished in favor of a multitude of stories. In the absence of Ariadne's thread to guide him, the individual feels the world around him as being more and more complex.

Inevitably, gloom and doubt settle over society. Anxiety seems to be most particularly felt in France. At the beginning of 1997, the European barometer concerning consumption showed that France is the European country where pessimism and gloom are the strongest. Those worried in the population doubled during the 1980's. 14% in 1982-1983, 28% in 1989-1990 (HATCHUEL and VOLATIERES, 1991). If recent numbers announce the return of relative optimism, the underlying anxieties remain (L'observateur Cetelem, 1999). For ROCHEFORT (1995), the source of anxieties are essentially individual (accidents, disease, aggression). Also, the author sees in society's individualism a generator of great fragility. Alone, the individual feels helpless facing his fears. In fact, when his life was linked to a community or collective structure, the individual could transcend his fears, and most particularly, those related to the passing of time and death.

Up to the present time, modernity's meta-stories allowed individuals to combat their anxiety about the future. With postmodernism, the individual must find new palliatives.

2. 1. 2. The return of the tribe

Facing this rise in individual anxieties, there is a resurgence of different types of communities and a return to fraternalism. Exchange networks (SUBTLE, 1995) are being established to make up for the exclusion of an increasing number of individuals from the market economy. For the individual, consumption becomes a means of making a gift to others by choosing companies that help the poor or those that take action to protect the environment.

Moreover, certain sociologists are observing a rebirth of clans and tribes while "*giga-entities*" from the modern period are on the decline (CATHELAT, 1997). CATHELAT puts forth two different types. First, he speaks of the resurgence of "*former cultural isolationist tribes*". The second type of clan identified by the authors makes a direct reference to MAFFESOLI's (1988) neo-tribalism. These new clans are described as investigation clans which make up a new form of clan system different from traditional tribes and which have a new form of "*sociality*". Contrary to traditional tribalism, their members are free to move from one clan to another. Each member's commitment is variable and results from free choice. The clan does not question the world which surrounds it, it adapts to it. Often, its function is exploratory and opens up to the world. Here, the individual tries to better deal with the spatiotemporal contraction thanks to the collective experiment within small groups. According to his mood, the individual puts on the appropriate costume that best fits the scene of the tribe to which he wants to momentarily belong. It is, in some sort, a game, or a theater where daily actors come on stage.

2. 2. The quest for eternity

With the contraction of space and time, a fear regarding the omnipresence of time in society, is born. To ward off time, the individual has no other choice but to search for what is permanent or, more precisely, for a little bit of eternity. However, politics nor religion no longer bear answers to his fears. As we have seen, the time of ideologies that promised better days are over. Their retreat creates a void that the world of consumption hurries to occupy. In this manner, the individual is going to search for his bearings by going to see the merchants of

the temple who, in turn, will help him get over his fears. As BAUDRILLARD (1992) reminds us, we want immortality here and now :

"Immortality of the soul, immortality in time, we have stopped believing in them a long time ago. [...] What we want is its immediate realization, by all means possible."

We can thus see in different consumption behaviors a defensive reaction coming from individuals faced with this omnipresence of time. Moreover, GUY and al. (1994) underline that certain works on the perception of time by the elderly show that they tend to underestimate the real amount of time spent which leads them to lose interest in it. One explanation given by LOMRANZ and al. (1985) is that for the elderly *"being conscious about the futur means being conscious about death"*. There is therefore nothing more normal than trying to reassure oneself about this tragic end. Can what happens on an individual level occur on a society wide level? In his essay about the story of death in the West, ARIES (1975) shows how death is pushed farther and farther away in our daily life which makes it even more unacceptable. Thus, today, it is not unimaginable that the world of consumption act as a means of warding of time. As the number of elderly persons continues to increase, this variable must be taken into account by marketing research. Furthermore, we feel that this phenomenon is not simply related to the elderly since all individuals must deal with this omnipresence of time.

In marketing, ROCHEFORT (1995) notes that the consumer increasingly prefers goods and services that are able to give *"immaterial reassurance"*. This idea does not pass by without making us suspect a quest for eternity.

Anxieties harbored by individuals is translated in their consumption where the search for security takes on different forms. For example, consumed products must be harmless for the individual or play a protective role. The progress of biological products attests to this. The individual wants to remain close with nature, get rural, rediscover a more organized period and no longer be confronted with *"patchwork time"*. The increasing number of *"alicaments"*¹ is equally revealing of this tendency. Individuals are in search of what could improve their health or protect them from everyday problems and from the outside world : antistress and antimicrobial wipes, electronic alarms, sound-proof windows...

The points of reference that the world of consumption offers are, however, not fixed in stone. How could they resist the "*spatiotemporal whirlwind*"? At the most, they embody an anchorage point, a type of durability, an impression of eternity.

The spatiotemporal perspective has allowed us to render evident what we call the contraction of space and time. The latter is itself explained by an excess of time and space which contributes to a rise in society's anxieties. These anxieties are seen in the world of consumption by a quest for "*immaterial of reassurance*" which is not without recalling a type of search for eternity, a sign of refusing time. Faced with this spatiotemporal whirlwind, the place acts as a shelter where the individual and the clan find refuge and where life gets renewed.

3. The various forms of places

Through the works of MOLES, we shall try and define place before indicating the various forms that it can take.

3. 1. Place

For MOLES and ROHMER (1978), the building of a place, or a "*here point*", consists in isolating a point in space with walls that one tries to root. The walls are not simply brick walls. They can be made by any element, physical or not, whose purpose is to create a breach in a given length. It can therefore be made of a legal barrier representing legal property or sacred possession can occur and turn a "*here point*" into a place as by the setting up of a fence. The place will become all the more differentiated as discontinuities grow numerous and stronger allowing the creation of a closed form. Its existence will be strengthened as the individual experiences it and commits a certain number of acts in it. Their repetition will anchor the place in the individual's mind. For MOLES and ROHMER (1978), these acts may consist in the placing of objects in the place by the individual, a sign of the places subordination to the individual.

We consider that the place acts as a rather important rupture in space and time in which the individual takes refuge in order to better resist the contraction of space and time. Stemming from this idea, we propose that three types of places, which are all joined along a continuum, be distinguished.

3. 2. Type 1 Places

The first type of place offers no grip on space or time. Here, places remain outside of space-time and can be considered as "*non-places*" (AUGE 1992). They are transit areas such as airports, train stations, planes and trains. They are universal and transnational. It could be in Paris, London or New York.

The individual finds himself entirely sheltered from time and space. One could even say that their existence is denied. In searching for an optimum, a type of perfect place, designers erased all the harshness which would have been able to make these places unique or allow life to appear. The use of glass and the state of transparency are characteristic of these places which equally help keep them from being anchored in space or time as if they were invisible to them. At the same time, this aides in the steralization of the place, of its death since life is never satisfied with just light. If in these types of places the individual can escape from the world, he finds himself equally alone. In fact, contact with others matters little and the reasons which bring the individual to these places are limited. Once the novelty of the place has passed, he is confronted with solitude and boredom. It is as if he has been transported beyond life and death, out of space-time, in weightlessness. Along the same lines, extraterrestrial space is itself also a place of transit, a pause before reaching another planet, artificial or not, where life and action would be possible.

Places of transist are multiplying in great metropolises. Their inhabitants no longer measure distance in terms of space needed to be covered, but in terms of duration. Space has almost disappeared as if its existence had been denied. The trip matters little, only the arrival counts. Time is equally denied here as well. It disappears within the speed of networks. In type 1 places, the individual is transported, either by plane or by electromagnetic waves. Here, the body knows only destinations, it no longer experiences the voyage or the passage.

We place virtual places in this category of place. In fact, the first thing that can be seen is that these new places lack maps. Perpetually evolving, it is like a mass of information whose contours are not well defined. Functioning in hypertext mode, they ignore gravitation. The objects found there have lost all their weight, all of their symbolic value. It is for this reason that everything is worn down more easily in these places. These new universes, the fruit of man's imagination, know no limits. The individual can give way to his dreams of power by becoming, for example, a professional Formula 1 driver or by putting on the blood stained clothes of Duke Nukem in an all out fight for life. But when the cold idea of death which awaits him comes to mind, the individual only feels a vague semblance of it. In fact, these spaces do not know time nor times arrow; everything here is reversible. By fleeing the real world, the individual finds himself in a world that he and only he can master. He plays God, but his actions are gratuitous and carry no responsibility. If the individual imagines having conquered time and space, it is only an illusion, but a reassuring and formative illusion as they allow learning complexity. However, they equally make us lose sight of the consequences of our actions and deprive us of different sensorial modalities.

3. 3. Type 2 Places

In this second type of place, space and time are reintroduced. However this last one is a simplification of space-time. Its purpose is simply to reassure the individual who is in search of making contact with an unknown universe. He is not engaged in it, he only recognizes himself in it. Thus, the place is in some sort a stylization of the world across hyper-realities. Anchoring in another time and space takes place.

Eating in ethnic restaurants would fit into this type of place. They propose a simplification of real space, a taming of it. The individual finds himself plunged into the atmosphere of a Chinese restaurant or that of a German brewery thanks to appropriate organization of the space. This anchoring can equally be arranged in time, that of the sixties or the medieval period.

Everything is set up to reassure the individuals, to allow them to better get acculturated without risk. They are invited to partake in the same imaginative transnational world. Thus, while a sense of being far from one's own country of origin exists, the shopping center acts, for many voyagers, as a reassuring bubble where they have the illusion of being part of a community of consumers who share the same values. In this type of place, the individual is seen but not taken into consideration. He keeps his anonymity. Only the completed function is appreciated. As long as the individual acts as he should, he can be considered as being free. Actually, this type of place is subject to a strict social organization. This place is controlled, reliable and profitable. Connected to this rigidity is an underlying logic of exclusion.

There is no risk venturing into this sometimes unknown space-time. It acts only as a decoration, a simple juxtaposition of characteristic elements of a given space or time. Everything must be typical and represent this other space or time. There must be a convergence of all the elements with the risk of creating an all too often flavorless and entirely sterilized hyper-reality. Because excess oftentimes leads to the feeling of imitations and falseness. Type 2 places are often expurgated versions of reality and its contradictions. A recycled version that brings reality to symbols and mummifies them. These places often possess a transnational character. In fact, they borrow from time and space the necessary elements that will be the basis for their decoration.

As with type 1 places, there exists a distance with the outside world and its dangers as well as a mastery of space. If individuals partake in certain activities in these places, it is mostly because they are already programmed. Here, the body is like a machine. Everything is standard and the body only explores a time and a space already known.

In the end, there is a touch of something eternal in this type of place. They have neither beginning nor end, no personal history. They only borrow history that has preceded them and that will pass them by. This is reassuring for the individual who goes away with a sense of eternity. Here again we find the contraction of space and time as mentioned earlier. Space and / or time rush to one place what they have as most characteristic, a challenge to the voyager.

Shopping centers are an example of type 2 places. FREITAS (1996) showed to what extent they acted as a means for man to shelter himself from the "*outside world*" and from his troubles : traffic jams, pollution, insecurity ... According to this author, "*Shopping centers*", are places where the individual is searching for the "*together being*" in a secure transnational universe. They are "*consumption temples*" where king object takes the stage in esthetic spectacles in which the individual also plays a role. Tribes, as well, play a role in this seemingly ideal city once dreamt of by Italian Renaissance architects. Today, architects' projects are no longer on the scale of towns. Their plans find solid ground in ideas of building gigantic shopping centers in the image of US "*Malls*".

3. 4. Type 3 Places

Type 3 places are reclaimed by real space and time. In some way, they act as an interface with the outside world. Life resumes its rights and tends to lead the individual away from his behavior patterns. It solicites from him reactivity and creativity. A "*vital insecurity*" reigns because the place is open and is subjected to the least minute disturbance. It is no longer a simple scene design or a show that is constantly being outbid. The place becomes social anew. It is therefore anthropological in the AUGÉ-ian (1992) sense, that is, more relational, historic and having more identity. In fact, type 3 places participate in constructing an identity for the individual and favors relationships between the occupants of the place. Finally, it takes its place in history and serves as a point of reference. However, this history is not one in the modern sense of the term, that is, universal, but is a history in the postmodern sense : a short story among other short stories, one about the place or individuals that share it. Offering a point of reference, it serves as the matrix where memories will form. It acts as an enlightener made of twist and turns, of comings and goings. And it is there that the individual finds himself initiated into the world that surrounds him, that he truly plays a role in it.

In type 3 places, the body explores the place. It covers it, becomes aware of the place and its existence. He puts himself in it and absorbs it in every way possible. This allows the individual to anchor himself in reality.

The individual does not remain alone to face the upheavals of space and time. He recognizes himself in the place and is recognized by others. He enters a collective, a clan which helps him live with his anxieties. It is in this type of place that life is organized and takes shape. Individuals and groups experiment new types of living, new codes. The individual thus finds himself in a known universe accompanied by other individuals who share the same values. Places already structured and occupied by individuals or groups can be found. It can also be places in the making, in full phase of experimentation.

These places teem with micro-level events, disruptive elements too small to be noticed, but which, through accumulation, lead to a new equilibrium. This never-ending swarming can worry the individual and lead him to prefer type 1 or type 2 places since, in those places, mastering space is difficult and demands active participation of the individual.

4. Discussion

This arbitrary division must not be perceived statically. In every place, there exists elements from places of all three types. This is desirable and no doubt means that the place is a success. A place is not condemned to be one place or the other. It is more like a continuum, a movement of construction-destruction of the place undergoes different phases depending on the circumstances and the individuals that occupy it. In fact, it is the individuals that make the place. As different individuals can live side by side in the same place, different clans can choose how the place will be. The elements that will transform the place from one type to the next are everywhere. While an individual may think he is in a type 1 place, a silent transformation of the place is already underway. The organic is everywhere, sooner or later, the conditions permitting it to bud will arrive. It is in these "*ecological pockets*" that life is experimented. This process is not without chaos since, as explained by LORENZ and POPPER (1965), life takes risks that are sometimes not beneficial.

"The characteristic of life is not in passive waiting but in permanent trying. Life tries something, it assumes risk. Whether this risk may seem to be an error does not change anything at all."

Moreover, the place can be a different type depending on the time of day. Eventually, what no doubt most differentiates type 1, 2 and 3 places, is the place that the body occupies, his role. In the first case, the body is annihilated, denied. In the second case, it is relegated to execute a very precise role. Finally, type 3 places is where the body can most freely express itself. It is through this place that the individual is going to explore space and time. Introducing entertainment and leisure activities within shopping centers will allow this passage toward type 3 places.

In every case, these places remain a reaction to the outside world. The *"town world"* (VIRILIO, 1995) makes the individual search for places where he will feel in security. These places have their own time that differs with that of the outside world which is more rapid and stifling. They are, in some ways, a shell inside of which the individual closes himself up, an antidote to the ever increasing speed of time. While offering him shelter, the place must also allow the individual to weave links with his peers. In fact, the *"fear of the outside"* leads man to search for contact with others (the tribes) in order to feel stronger, to feel as if he exist.

Henceforth, the designers of places are conceiving what they call places of life. In each case, we think that the designer must reflect upon the ways in which the individual will make the place his own. Will it be for him in a place of type 1, 2 or 3? We feel that necessary measures must be taken so that the individual can be confronted with the outside world. Also, it will be necessary to allow him to feel as if he is in a type 3 place while at the same time providing a certain level of security. Why not mix type 1 places with type three by installing access-points to virtual universes? Besides, aren't pagers and mobile phones types of Ariadne's threads whose roles are to reassure the individual when he finds himself in the *"outside world"*? If type 1 places reassure the individual, some authors feel that it presents a risk to man and his relationship with the world. Nevertheless, we consider that his association with the sensitive world contributes in reassuring the individual and eliminating his fears that he may have regarding the new spaces. As DE ROSNAY (1996) underlines it :

"The more the world dematerializes, the more we need new spaces to meet and socially interact."

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¹ French word : «good for you health foods»